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ABSTRACT

To provide meaningful experiences for their members, organizations (educational as well as noneducational) must (1) insist on congruence between stated goals and actions to achieve those goals, (2) seek the best in people and respect individuality, (3) create an accurate understanding of and empathy with those involved in the organization, and (4) produce outcomes commensurate with inputs. (RA)

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MANAGEMENT CURES FOR EDUCATIONAL ILLS
OR
THE MENTAL HEALTH OF AN ORGANIZATION

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The great American experiment is still just that; an experiment. We haven't proven that we can provide meaningful schooling for all the students amidst all their diversity. Today, one out of three Americans is involved either as an employee or a student in the schooling enterprise across this country. That is big business. The unfortunate part about schooling is that most people, including the managers of education, haven't realized that it is big business. We still operate the enterprise as if it were a cottage industry. The reason, of course, is our strong belief in local control, which I support. However, it is imperative that we discover how to operate a large industry such as education using the best modern management techniques yet still maintain quality and interest in each individual.

An economist named Baumol has recently developed some prognostications on the expenditures in education. He has gathered data beginning in 1834 up to the present time. His figures indicate that by the year 2084, if the current trend continues, it will take all of the income from this country to support the schooling enterprise. He's also done some work in Canada, and by the same method of calculation has deduced that by 1995 it will take all of Canada's income to support their public education enterprise. Obviously, it is imperative that something be done to alter this trend. With small management units

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and under local control change comes slowly, but there are some optimistic signs that the trend is changing. For example, in Oregon, we recently sponsored a conference with 100 public and non-public school administrators---elementary, secondary, and college people--to consider the subject of productivity in education. If I had announced a conference about productivity five years ago I doubt that I would have had 10 people attend the conference, or at most attend with a constructive attitude about the process. But, this summer, these 100 educators evidenced keen and optimistic interest in looking at the productivity of the schooling enterprise.

A psychiatrist friend of mine in a non-client relationship gave me a new perspective on how to move schooling into a more productive direction. I had asked him the question, "What are the key factors in making the determination if a person is insane or not?" He responded with three very interesting points that are equally applicable to organizations, and particularly to public education.

"The first thing we look for is congruence. The degree to which a person is congruent is the degree to which he or she probably has good mental health," he said. By congruence, he meant harmony, harmony between one's goals and what one does. There must be congruence between what people believe and what they do, what they say and what they do. This kind of congruence is one evidence of good mental health.

The second point he called, "unconditional positive regard." The more conditions a person sets up about whether he is going to like someone else or not, the greater problem this person has in coping with society and with life generally. The more negative an individual is about other people or about problem solving the more difficulty he has in the field of mental health.

And third, he emphasized the need for "accurate empathy." The accuracy of one's empathy for another individual and the accuracy of one's ability to assess what another person is going through, will indicate some degree of good mental health. The more inaccurate our empathy, the greater difficulty we encounter.

These three areas, coupled with the element of productivity, offer an excellent basis for evaluating the mental health, if you will, of our educational process and our schooling organization. Consider for a moment the first area, congruence. If there is any one general problem in life, it is the "Say-Do" problem. As parents we sometimes tell our children to do one thing, but we do another. In schooling we have one set of goals but we often seem to be concentrating in another field. Education has been guilty on occasion of incongruence between goals and actions, indeed between investment and results. We do not have a shortage of goals and objectives in education, but so many of them are not measurable, and represent little more than a hope. Frankly, it is difficult to get staff, student, or community commitment to a fog bank. When goals and objectives are hazy we tend to get fuzzy responses.

To attack this problem our Oregon Board of Education has adopted eleven state-level priorities, five instruction-related priorities and six management-related priorities. We are in the process of developing planning statements outlining state guidelines for each of the priority areas. At this time we have five completed. They outline proposed accomplishments in simple, direct

terms with little educationese. We have asked local schools and community colleges to file with us their plans by responding to two of the planning statements--reading and vocational education. As we gain time and experience we will call for local plans in other areas. The state-level plans are general in nature, and we are asking for specific local district plans, containing measurable objectives, using our state-level planning statements as a blueprint. In the future we intend to evaluate local schools and community colleges according to their stated plans. This, then, is an effort to develop congruence to match what we say with what we do.

Recently, I asked our business office to provide an accounting of our State Department of Education expenditures in relation to our priorities. This would be a pretty clear test of congruence for our own operation. If we say these are our priorities and we are spending our money somewhere else, then we have a problem with congruence. Well, as some of you can guess, most accounting systems are not set up by programs, so the information is going to take time to obtain. But, we are working on developing some program budgets (along with the line-item stewardship accounting system) in order that we can accurately measure both stewardship and degree of congruence.

Another example of a problem with congruence is evidenced by an analysis I made of my son's high school curriculum catalogue. I had asked the principal how many of his students go on to graduate from a four-year college. His estimate was approximately 20 percent. On the basis of that information, I wanted to see what the congruence was between stated goals--i.e., meeting the needs of <u>all</u> the students--and what courses were offered.

I found that 80 percent of the curriculum in that high school was aimed at the 20 percent who would graduate from a four-year college. There certainly wasn't much congruence in that catalogue between what they say and what they do. Our career education planning statement is designed to bring congruence in this area.

I have tried to redefine the second point, unconditional positive regard, using a little less psychiatric jargon. Essentially this says to me that our organizations, our procedures must <u>seek the best in people.</u> We cannot look only at investment results but we must also lay over our efforts a human relations template: Do our practices seek the best in people in our pursuit of efficiency and productivity? We tend to worship at the shrine of bigness in this country. We assume that if we can make it bigger, it will automatically get better. Bigness may help produce efficiency, but all too often it loses sight of the individual. If there is one great challenge to our country, it is how to bring to big business, big government, big labor, and big education, the management expertise that can maintain a perspective of the intrinsic worth of every individual, and still maintain efficiency.

Frankly, I feel our community colleges are making a real contribution in seeking the best in people. We have spent a lot of money on colleges and universities that were designed to serve a small segment of our society. What about the other 80 percent of our citizens who will not obtain a college degree? What kind of post-high school opportunities are needed or desired in a technological society? This has been the challenge for community colleges. In Oregon we have tried diligently to keep our

community colleges focused on the goal of serving those individuals that have not generally been served by the colleges and universities. This is a tough goal to keep alive. There is a communicable disease in this business that causes people to believe the prestigeful thing in this society is to be involved in a typical university kind of training. Colleges and universities have a role to play but there are many other educational opportunities that are also needed.

While president of Lane Community College, I had an unforgettable experience in this area of seeking the best in people. One night I was in a supermarket and the woman ahead of me was paying her bill and talking to the clerk. When the clerk asked her what she was doing now she replied, "Oh, I'm a student at Lane Community College." She turned around and I recognized her as one of the students in our adult basic education program that was teaching people to read and write. She had a look of real pride on her face. I walked out of that supermarket reflecting on the incident. Some of my friends in higher education would have blanched with shame to hear that a college was associated with the fundamental business of learning to read and write. However, I couldn't help but feel what a great thing it was to have a post-high school institution in our society that was dedicated to doing that exact thing. This particular woman successfully completed her high school diploma requirements and went through the nurses' training program at that particular institution. That to me is real prestige.

One of the great thrills I had at this college was with a group of eighteen women who were studying to be practical nurses in a special manpower training program. Most of them had been on welfare a good part of their lives. The

instructor, a beautiful human being, almost literally dragged these women through the practical nursing course. They invited me to their graduation exercises. The graduation speaker was the class president and she was sixty-two years old. Usually, I am not overly enthusiastic about such events, but this time I sat there and tears actually ran down my cheeks as this woman said that for the first time in her life she felt dignity, self-respect, and most important of all, she had skills. She had skills she could sell. The schooling enterprise must find better ways to give people skills to compete, skills to cope, skills to master technology. We need competency-based, skills-oriented kinds of high school graduation requirements. It is great to see the confidence that comes from having skills and knowing you can do something. As I faced some of my faculty the next day, I was painfully aware of an almost unconscious insidious effort to upgrade the standards, develop tougher admission requirements, give great emphasis to the college preparatory college transfer programs. Seeking the best in people is a never-ending task that requires a great deal of organizational self-analysis as well as outside evaluation.

The third factor, <u>accurate empathy</u>, is particularly important to schooling. In order to develop more accurate empathy on my part, I taught a first grade class for the month of January. It was a great experience that entailed a lot of hard work and a lot of enjoyment. My experiences in the classroom had been only at the high school and college level. I had taught graduate classes, but I had never taught a first grade class. Contrary to what most people assume, I worked harder teaching a first grade class than teaching any other class I have ever taught. Part of the difficulty, of course, was due to my inexperience and incompetence in working in that

area. And so I had to make up for that with a lot of hard work. My primary purpose in pursuing this experience was to develop accurate empathy for the problems faced by the first grade teacher.

The only real reason for our existence as school administrators is the teaching-learning process. I think it would help if college registrars would go through the college registration line from time to time to develop some accurate empathy for what the student must face. I believe every school and college administrator ought to teach a class every year, perhaps even take a class occasionally.

The final point I would like to discuss is <u>productivity</u>. What do we get for our dollar investment? I'm convinced, after talking to thousands of people, that there is still a massive reservoir of support for public schooling. In spite of all we read, the great American hope still rests in a free public schooling enterprise. But there is also an increasing concern regarding the results and outcomes of the schooling enterprise. Educators have worried for years about input; how many teachers, how many dollars, how large should class sizes be? We haven't given enough attention to the outcomes of education.

My office issued a beautiful biennial report on Oregon education to the 1971 legislature. Frankly, I thought it was well done. But upon further analysis, I found the whole thing was essentially on the input side. How many students do we have? How many new schools do we have? There were only a half dozen items in the total report that were outcome oriented. I made a high resolve that our next report to the legislature would be in terms of output indicators.

There are three fundamental questions regarding productivity of educational practices. 1) Will this practice or program reduce failure? 2) Will this practice or program stretch the dollar? 3) Will this practice or program increase learning? For example, I tend to think that salary negotiations should be centered around productivity. A "quid-pro-quo" negotiation is necessary. What do I get for what I give? Or perhaps a better question, what do I give for what I get? I believe everyone should share in any cost-of-living increases. But beyond that, I would favor a salary program based on productivity. Will your efforts increase learning? If you can prove that; then you ought to be compensated to a greater degree. Will your efforts reduce failure? If so, then you ought to share in the salary increases. Will your efforts stretch the dollar? If you can, then you should be properly compensated. I believe we need to unbundle the teaching process more than we have in the past. For example, we need to delineate what tasks require a master's degree and what tasks in the teaching process can be done with very little training. The best way to utilize staff is by employing differentiated staffing--or unbundling the teaching process--and then matching the pay scale with the assignment. Some of you may remember the Supreme Court decision when IBM first came out with computers. You could only buy or rent a computer if you would take the whole training package. The court ruled IBM had to unbundle it. The same appears to be true of the teaching process. Many tasks which I did as a first grade teacher didn't require a master's degree. Someone with less training could have done just as well. Conversely, there were a few areas that required more training.

As another dimension to productivity I have presented to our State Board a proposal to include in our high school graduation requirements some "real-life" tests. Can an individual compute his income tax? Can an individual take a ballot measure, interpret it, and give reasons for a yes or no vote for the issue? Can an idividual compute interest rates? Can an individual master his technology? Does he have any skills to sell in the career market-place? Can an individual read a driver's manual at a certain proficiency level? Can a person swim? Can a girl change an automobile tire? It is our intention to pursue these matters vigorously. Certainly an individual should be able to master some of the fundamental skills of survival in our complex civilization in addition to completing the requirements of the typical four years of English, three years of history, and two years of mathematics.

Allow me to recap this template of principles for determining the mental health of our educational organizations. Is there congruence and harmony in the system? Do we have clear performance-based goals, and is our response to these goals clear and precise? Secondly, do our policies, practices, and notions really seek the best in our staff, our students? Third, is there accurate empathy and understanding by those involved in the organization? This calls for a degree of communication that rarely comes by chance, but rather, springs from a carefully designed system. Finally, questions must be asked about the productivity or outcomes of the organizational effort. What are the results emanating from the investment? This proposal may be incomplete and indeed difficult to put into operation, but I am convinced that organizations are healthy or unhealthy as a result of such activities as I have mentioned. Lest I be charged with a lack of congruence between preaching and action, I have assigned one man to work full-time analyzing

my own organization in this light. He is laying this template over our activities and analyzing the degree to which we stray in each of these four areas. Time will tell the full story, but already we see simple areas for improvement.